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First Step Program provides students chance to SOAR

by Air Vehicles Directorate Public Affairs

WRIGHT-PATTERSON AIR FORCE BASE, Ohio — Thanks to volunteers from the Air Force Research Laboratory Air Vehicles Directorate, children in the Dayton First Step Program got an opportunity to build and fly small-scale aircraft, parachutes and hot air balloons July 17-19.

The volunteers help prepare these students for a larger event with, SOAR, "Students Open to Aviation Research," an integral part of the Vectren Dayton Air Show that offers Dayton youth the opportunity to engage in career exploration and educational activities.

The Wright Site Educational Outreach office developed the program in order to educate youth in preparation for the upcoming 2003 Centennial of Flight celebration, as well as generating interest in careers in aeronautics and engineering.

The program is accomplished through collaboration among the United States Air and Trade Show, Dayton Public Schools, the City of Dayton, Miami Valley RTA, local business and industry, and community organizations.

SOAR program volunteer, Max Blair, (center) an Air Vehicle Directorate Research Aerospace Engineer, assists Charlie Hicks (left) with the basics of flying an e-charger. Christian Jordan Blair looks on.

Hank Baust, VA Project Engineer, and Maxwell Blair, VA Research Aerospace Engineer, coordinated the volunteer effort aimed at introducing children to the field of avionics.

During the first portion of the program held at Buckeye Trails summer day camp, approximately 175 children in kindergarten through eighth grade rotated through four stations, which included using hair dryers, ping-pong balls and straws to demonstrate aerodynamic concepts, such as Bernoulli's principle, as well as witnessing an indoor hot air balloon launch.

The engineers, mentors and camp counselors then assisted older children in making and launching simple e-charger airplanes, tissue-paper hot air balloons and garbage bag parachutes, once again demonstrating how basic equipment and designs can be used to explain aviation principles.

The final day, volunteers set up two booths at the 2002 Dayton Air Show to demonstrate the basics of aviation. **@**